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A PLEA FOR
Ministerial Liberty.

A
DISCOURSE,

ADDRESSED, BY APPOINTMENT, TO THE

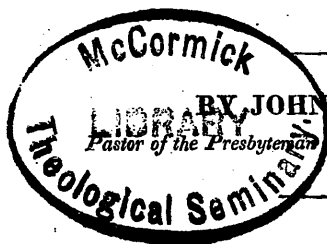
DIRECTORS AND STUDENTS

OF THE

Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church,

AT PRINCETON,

ON THE 17th OF MAY, 1824.



BY JOHN M. DUNCAN,

Pastor of the Presbyterian Church, Tammany street, Baltimore.

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It may be necessary to state, that the whole of the following discourse was not delivered on the occasion for which it was prepared. The first part of it, embracing a formal analysis of the Scripture passage which was selected, was, for want of time, entirely omitted.

It may be necessary further to state, that in preparing the whole for the press, the latter part has been revised; nothing has been omitted, but several additions have been made, with a view of expressing the sentiments, designed to be declared, more clearly.

The discourse is now offered to the public, under a hope, and with a prayer, that it may be blessed to all who read it; and, that especially the young minister of the gospel may be induced very highly to prize, and very determinedly to "stand fast in, the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free."



DISCOURSE.

1 COR. CH. IX. VER. 16—27.

For though I preach the gospel I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, wo is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews: to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;

To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.

To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air.

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.

THE Apostle has explicitly asserted, that this part of his Epistle to the Corinthian christians, receives its peculiar form from a letter addressed by them to him, referring certain matters about which they differed to his apostolic judgment. One of these involved the

broad question of Christian liberty; or inquired into the use that might be made of an abstract right, which affected no essential principle, or, at most, only the application of essential principle to things indifferent in themselves. The case appears to have comprised the following particulars: "We know that an idol is nothing in the world; and that meat offered in sacrifice to an idol, cannot thereby be polluted. Moreover, we know, that the new economy has entirely modified evangelic institutions: altered the extent of connecting divine and human things together, in the arrangement of religious ordinances; and restored to us, by virtue of our union with 'the heir of all things,' the free and indiscriminate use of earthly creatures, agreeably to the grant originally given in Paradise. These things being true, are we culpable in partaking of a public feast, prepared in an idol's temple? May we not accept the invitation of an unbeliever to a private entertainment, when such meat is presented on the table, without contracting guilt? Or, going to the market to provide food for our households, is there any peril in purchasing this meat, if offered for sale?" Questions of conscience, which, considering the religious knowledge of the age, and the character of the temptations under which they occurred, were certainly not framed without considerable ingenuity; and even now, though ours be the age of philosophic theology, the same principle called up into discussion, and modified in its forms to correspond with the change of circumstances, might puzzle the majority of professing christians. For we are still fond of arguing questions of abstract right, frequently not hesitating to estimate piety by the amount of controversial zeal, and throwing lines of circumval-

lation around, not only each other's personal liberty, but around Christ's ordinances themselves.

The Apostle, leaving the particular cases for future discussion, on which he professedly enters in the tenth chapter, for the present contents himself with showing them that their argument was defective, as they had omitted several circumstances, materially important to a correct decision. In the first place, says he, "meat commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat, are we the better, neither if we eat not, are we the worse." This were enough one would think, to annihilate the whole difficulty. What christian, whose mind is enlarged, or whose heart is mellowed, could be very strenuous in an argument about a matter of such microscopic dimensions? In the second place, "every man has not that knowledge" of which you boast; and they, who, without this knowledge, eat of this meat, do it with conscience of the idol: they eat it as meat, offered to an idol, and their conscience being weak, is defiled. For, as he informed the Romans, in a parallel argument on the same subject, "to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean:—happy is the man who condemneth not himself in the thing that he alloweth; and he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom. 14.) Observe, he continues, the operation of these things; the knowledge of which you boast, is conceded to you, by many of your christian brethren, who are thence led to infer your ability to instruct them: What then, if one of these should see you, men of large spiritual attainments, sit at meat in an idol's temple: his conscience judges this to be the extreme of social intercourse, and cannot dis-

criminate between you and the idolater himself. Yet the temptation may be fascinating; the occasion for festivity and mirth may very strongly allure; your example will embolden his conscience; and he may enter the idol's temple, which, but for you, he never would have done, and join in the ceremony he considers idolatrous; thus publicly allowing the very thing in which he condemns himself. The conclusion of the whole is, "through your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died." O, surely this were enough to startle any man, who was not drudging out a heartless profession under the infatuation of some soul destroying passion; enough to awaken every sensibility of the christian spirit, and reveal its accurate resemblance to the master himself. Each one would retire from the idol's temple, singing "hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Paul, the intrepid Paul, he whose labours were so abundant, and whose stripes had scathed his body with the marks of the Lord Jesus; who spake with tongues more than they all; whose eyes had seen the beauty, and whose ears had heard the music, of God's heavenly habitation; Paul, while he states the particulars of his delightful theme, feels the glow of that rapturing love, which had already carried him through such variety of scene in his Master's service; and declares for himself, "if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

These are not mere words of course, on the part of the Apostle. No man could speak more confidently of

works of benevolence, rendered with a cheerful and untiring spirit, than he. The biographic sketch of his ministerial career, is one continued strain of exalted eulogy, if in such eulogy any man may indulge before the Lord. Hear his appeal. You know, says he, to the Corinthians, my right to a pecuniary compensation for my labours among you.—A right I can rest upon my apostolic office, as being a distinct vocation in human society; upon the peculiar fact of our spiritual relation, constituted by the exercise of that office among you, ye being the seal of my apostleship in the Lord: upon the constitutional principles of society, sustained in all the transactions of life, as I have laboured for your interest, not as a slave whom you may control, but as a free-man who has equal rights with yourselves; upon natural law, applying itself even to beasts of burden, requiring for their toil in your service, a righteous provision; upon the known statute in the church through past ages; upon the common practice of the other apostles; upon a fair comparison of the character of my labours with that of the recompense I might claim;—It is impossible you should dispute my right. Yet you know I have not asserted my right; cheerfully have I waved it hitherto for the gospel's sake; and even now, I will suffer no man to snatch from me the comfort I derive from this recollection. In this I glory; and “it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void; as the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia.”

Here, the verses, at present under consideration, take up the subject. And we are, in analysing them, called upon to develop some moral principles, charac-

teristic of the evangelical institute, which are deeply interesting to all christians, whatever relations they may sustain to the church or the world: principles, which embrace the personal objects of their *glorying*, as required to individualise each one himself from all other human beings, and to estimate his own responsibilities as covering all that is peculiar in the sphere in which he may move, or in the service he may personally render.

16. *For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me: yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.*

Paul is plainly speaking for himself. The circumstances he details are purely personal, and are not to be applied, with an arbitrary uniformity, to every minister of the gospel. His object is, to define with precision his own example, and to prevent the Corinthians from mistaking his meaning, when he would illustrate his views on the subject of personal liberty, by tracing them out as most considerately and affectionately exemplified in his own ministerial deportment.

It is not the right to preach the gospel, he waves. In such a case he would have gone out of the sphere of his personal will, into acts of pure licentiousness, and converted a question of absolute duty into a mere matter of individual liberty. And that would have been a dereliction in evangelical morals, very far below him, who was always ready to be offered upon the sacrifice and service of the faith of his spiritual children. He very distinctly declares, that any right he might have to resolve the exercise of the ministerial

office into his personal will, had been suspended by the interference of divine sovereignty: that the circumstances of his ministerial call had devolved upon him an imperious necessity; and that instead of confiding, the propriety or impropriety of his proclaiming "Christ crucified" to the Gentiles, to his own deliberations, the Master had written out a peremptory commission, which he must execute at the peril of his soul.—You remember, brethren, how it was. The Lord Jesus met him, when, as a mad persecutor, he was hastening to Damascus on an enterprise of blood, and threw around his infuriate spirit the intense, the overpowering beam of his glory. What a scene for such a man! Proud of his intellect, spoiled by philosophy, and demoniac in purpose! The simple annunciation from him who had stepped to the circle of the heavens, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," obliterated every fell project of his ambitious soul, and left him incapable to divine, wherefore all this had been done. His hard heart, broken, subdued, melted, transformed, eagerly and painfully asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Can we suppose that he was now resolving upon the high honour of preaching the gospel, and imagined his pretensions too clear to be equivocal? Did his pride, merely changing its haughty and towering claims, suddenly aspire to the dignity of the apostolic office? Surely such were not our first impressions, when the commandment came to us, and we felt it as the sentence of death in our consciences. Taking it in its best form, and substituting for pride, a desire to do good, did our first convictions admit a purpose so well defined, or convert our passions so instantaneously into

such warmth of heavenly breathings, such largeness of spiritual desires, inconsiderate of unworthiness, responsibility, or qualification? Or, admitting that we had thoughtlessly conceived the heavenly purpose, is our supposition *therefore* derogatory to Saul of Tarsus?—That youth, whose mind received no illumination from Stephen's heavenly visage; whose ear caught no sweet accents, whose heart did not melt, whose brow did not relax, under Stephen's prayer of forgiving love? Why more derogatory to him, than the actual fact was to Moses, when standing on the holy spot before the burning bush, he heard a voice from the midst of the unconsumed and unconsuming flame pronounce, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." Did Moses covet the high honour? Did his elated spirit immediately embrace the apostolic commission, like one whose intellect could estimate a nation's weal, and was in haste and restless to be gone? Nay, afraid to look upon God, he hid his face and said, "who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

But let Saul speak for himself:—"And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Paul's ordination, brethren, was a heavenly transac-

tion; there was no room for consultation with flesh and blood; the advice of all human beings, though consecrated by the spirit of fire on the day of Pentecost, was out of place. The master himself "sanctified" this chosen vessel: the light of his countenance, outspread over the subdued persecutor, was the consecrating ceremony. "I have," announced the Redeemer, "appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness:" and gathering up the folds of his mediatorial glory, he said, arise, and returned to his place on high.—What must Paul do? Was not a necessity laid upon him? Did not a fearful weight hang over his refusal?—You understand him when he says, "I have nothing to glory of," and lays his hand upon his mouth, exclaiming, "wo is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"—He proceeds;

17. For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward.

Here is the reverse of Paul's individual case; and that which many others might realise, though he could not. The remark is predicated upon that personal responsibility, under which every minister must live to the glory of the Lord Jesus, and which will be exhibited in all its awful importance on the judgment day. Could his induction into the ministerial office have been ranged under those personal volitions, which elicit the cultivation of talent, improve circumstances, and judge of opportunities, he would then have traced out, in the simple fact of his preaching the gospel, something in which he might glory, as productive of good to men, and that courted the smile of divine approbation. He could have told of his official relations

as being desired, sought, and accepted, of his own unconstrained will. He could have urged his free and firm decision, as indicative of an entire devotedness to the Lord Jesus; a lofty admiration of his unutterable condescension to the children of sorrow; and of his own ardent love to the souls of men. And the whole he could have set before the world, as a fine illustration of his ministerial injunctions to these Corinthians; to be very tender of the interests of others, and not to be thoughtlessly, or selfishly, or unrelentingly, maintaining an abstract right at the expense of the spiritual comforts of a weak brother.

Nor would the master have disavowed the moral association; but would faithfully have recorded it for that day, when in all his fearful majesty, he shall come to reckon with his servants, and render unto each according to the deeds done in the body. Let no man discard a distinction, so finely and affectionately elucidated, by one, who so fondly argued the glorious principle of free grace, and so ardently longed to meet his master in the upper sanctuary, that he might lay his crown at his feet: who now, on his way, and bearing his cross, desired to be clothed upon with his house which is from heaven, and has long since been numbered with those, who "came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."—He wishes to be clearly understood, and endeavours to be more explicit:

17. But if against my will, a dispensation, or the stewardship, of the gospel, is committed unto me, what is my reward then?

We would briefly paraphrase his question thus,

If without my consent, or not consulting my inclination, a talent is deposited with me, which I must secure, improve and account for; if I cannot hide it in the earth without guilt; if to be too indolent or suspicious to employ it, or too churlish to trust it with others who may be more faithful, be the sure precursor of condemnation; in what train of circumstances shall I exhibit my personal responsibilities? How shall I gain another talent, and so acquire a reward? Or when the master inquires how I have behaved myself to his "little ones," what shall I reply? Anticipating such a scrutiny, what have I now to encourage my heart, and sustain my anxious spirit? If every man is to be rewarded according to his works, what have I to say, that I may not be rejected? What is my reward, seeing that I preach the gospel under a *necessity*?

18. *Verily, that when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.*

The apostle was, we suppose, labouring under some very distressing apprehensions on this subject. He was afraid lest he might hinder the gospel by pressing his claim, and so abuse his power by being more punctilious, exact, or severe, than his own case made necessary. In his second epistle to the Corinthians, when again referring to this subject, for these explanations appear to have hurt their feelings, he makes a solemn appeal to his master, that he was not actuated by any resentments against them: but yet he repeats his resolve to persevere; "what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them that desire occasion." Perhaps there were some rational philosophers, in this

refined city, far famed for the wisdom of words, who could not, or would not, see any thing about this noble spirit, that ranged a sphere so far above them, but some sordid interest, or some secular scheme. Perhaps there were some very tender professors, who, taking the personal religion of their ministers into their own safe keeping, were afraid they would grow rich and worldly, if they enjoyed along with themselves the common comforts of life; or, who, talking much about their love for truth, showed that they loved their money a vast deal more. Perhaps there were some pious zealots, clad in ministerial robes, who started it up as a subject of controversy, and compassed christendom for proselytes, as if an association framed on principles of palpable injustice, and calculated to convert the assemblies of God's saints into companies of paupers, by teaching them how to receive another man's labour for nothing, must necessarily become the more popular plan; or, as if the people's offerings to the God of sanctuaries and Bibles, had ceased to be a religious service, and contempt must be poured upon the widow's mite, as it is cast into the treasury of the Lord. This last pious project seems to have presented the real state of the case. For the apostle describes them as "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ." It is painful to reflect, how little the character of a faithful minister is sometimes understood both in the world and in the church; and how often, a cowardly fling about money, may compel him into sacrifices that christians should be ashamed to see him make.

At this present moment the world and the church had both to deal with a man of lofty principle. One

who scanned his associations with human beings; one who was pre-eminently fitted to answer many an objection to truth, which multitudes have not been ashamed to urge again, since he refuted it: and to exemplify in his own person ministerial superiority above many a sneer, which multitudes have not been ashamed to repeat again, since he rebuked it. He could forego many comforts, and see others enjoy them, without envy. He could see Cephas, the brethren of the Lord, and other Apostles, lead about a wife, a sister, and receive from the churches that compensation to which they were entitled, without any emotion: nor, as he laboured with his own hands, that the gospel of Christ might not be hindred, did he utter a single murmur. He however enjoins his ministerial habits in this matter upon no other Apostle: for then he would have arrayed statute against statute, and converted a question of personal liberty into a matter of absolute duty.—Noble principles for a dweller upon earth! What else can compensate him, but his heavenly rewards? And how could he refrain from glorying in the prospect of sitting with his Redeemer upon the throne, a judge of angels and of the world, and in every intermediate circumstance that brightened that prospect, or increased the joy that was set before him?

Our principle of exposition is confirmed by following out the fuller details of this Apostolic example: in which, from their appearance to our eye, ten thousand instances of such spiritual disinterestedness, in waving a personal abstract right for the general good, might have occurred.

19. *For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself the servant of all, that I might gain the more.*

He would here inform us that a necessity to preach the gospel, did not involve him in an obligation to bow to popular whim, or to surrender a personal right in order to soften a popular prejudice; did not narrow the sphere of his personal liberty; did not merge his individuality of existence in his social relations; did not render his numerous sacrifices and multiplied condescensions matters of imperative duty. "I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?" Is there any special statute suspending the law of ministerial support in our case? Are we not as free as Cephas, or any other Apostle? We are free from all men; but we may, if we will, make ourselves the servants of all. And he adds, I have cheerfully done it. A door is open, and I have chosen to enter it. A prospect brightens before me, and I pant to acquire its glories. A sphere of labour is stretched out; varied, painful, difficult, hazardous; calling for the devotedness of a victim, demanding the spirit of a martyr, and I have resolved to occupy it. No doubt he sought direction and waited for an answer. A man appearing in the visions of the night and crying for help, would be interpreted as a heavenly intimation, and at any time change any purpose of his own, so submissive was he to the spirit of the ministerial office. He would not adventure in his own strength: he would not call presumption a virtue: he would not seek to relume the darkness which he entered, without the light of the divine countenance shining upon his own soul: he would not attempt

to pass through floods, which the ark of the Lord had not divided. But he coveted usefulness: stood equipped for contest: and hoped, by turning many to righteousness, to shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as a star for-ever and ever. And his sympathising master, who went himself in bloody sweat to Calvary, out of love to man, would not refuse to let his servant follow him. Of old, he gave to Elisha, when he asked for it on Jordan's bank, Elijah's mantle. And Paul too he heard. He caught him up into the third heavens, that his soul might be full of the glory of his work, and his brow wear the full impression of his ministerial image.—“I have made myself the servant of all, *that I might gain the more.*”—My brother in the ministry, it is a glorious thing to have communion with the master, in the power of his resurrection.

Observe the extent to which he carried his condescension to the level of other men. To the Jew, so scrupulously maintaining the distinction of meats, and so accurately observing days and months and years, as prescribed by his national law, though conscious of his own liberty, he conformed himself in such particulars of external ceremony, that by avoiding his resentments where there was no just occasion of exciting them, and by acquiring his confidence, he might induce him patiently and affectionately to listen to the gospel, and thus gain him for Christ. To those who were under law, having their principles and practices predicated upon revelation, he became as under law, conforming himself in things indifferent, that he might lead such to Christ. To those who were without law, or Gentiles, who were not entirely destitute of moral principles, as creating some practical distinctions between virtue and

vice, and many of whose customs, in relation to the use of earthly things, were perfectly innoxious to him as a free spiritual man, to such, and in relation to such things, he became as without law, that he might turn them from dumb idols, to serve the living and true God. To those who were weak, whose consciences were not much enlightened, and whose personal liberty was circumscribed, he became as weak, that he might succour them by his sympathy. In short he made himself all things to all men, considering them as human beings, having immortal souls to be saved: for their sake he submitted to every variety of inconvenience, and cheerfully consented to every sacrifice, that, by being abundant in his labour of love, he might by all means save some.

Surely this is noble disinterestedness, such as all christians should cultivate. It is limited only by such considerations as these: that we must not mistake duty for liberty, or, by breaking God's law, do evil that good may come: that we do not enter upon a course we have no qualification to run, and so interfere with others, whom the Lord has called to effect what we hasten to accomplish without being sent; and that we do not lend our benevolent efforts to any project, however fair it may seem, at the expense of those whom God has placed near us as the special objects of our regards. Religion does not consist in an influence that consecrates the general matters of human life, and is incapable of being outspread over its details.

But after all, did not the Apostle run some risk of losing his personal integrity, and compromising the institutions of grace to the prejudices of men? He was aware that such a question might be forced upon him; and as there is in political and religious controversy no

more common artifice than that of catching at words, or hanging an argument upon expressions which at first sound queer, or have not been consecrated by their antiquity, he introduces a clause to relieve his phraseology from the appearance of heresy, and gives that clause a parenthetical shape that an unfavourable impression might not have time to form. "To them," says he, "that are without law, I became as without law." An incautious declaration this surely, which, even his well defined object, could scarcely shield from antinomian abuse. But he instantly qualifies it: "being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ." How easy a thing it is for a minister of the cross to be misunderstood! Even an apostle must scan, as with an eagle's eye, the moral size of those whom he addresses.—The question was not unlike that which is agitating the church at the present day, and before which many a Dagon shall fall from christian altars, ere that bright morning has fully dawned, which now begins to dim our twinkling stars, whether pure christian love is consistent with pure christian morals? O, He, who clothes himself with light as with a garment, and who has proclaimed among his creatures the law of love; he, who "gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap, and layeth up the depth in storehouses;" will overturn, and overturn, and overturn, until morality is made to rest upon its own essential principle, and christians have grown like their master in all that is meek and lovely.

It is to be remembered that the Apostle is arguing a mere question of personal liberty, and endeavouring to instruct christians of all ages, that they should never quarrel about *little things*: that he is discussing mat-

ters on which man, as a creature of individual volitions, desiring the good of his fellow man, is called upon to decide for himself; and which, when freely and affectionately done, do not escape the divine notice, nor lose their reward: that he is urging religious views, which, though he might assume them of his own accord, yet he would permit no man to prescribe to him. No man was more careful to preserve a good conscience than Paul, or more promptly resented an encroachment upon his rights as the Lord's free man. He could consent to the circumcision of Timothy for the gospel's sake; but when the circumcision of Titus was authoritatively demanded, by some who came in privily to *spy out* his liberty in Christ Jesus, it was peremptorily refused. He would cheerfully do as a matter of personal liberty, what he would most sternly rebuke as a piece of ecclesiastical tyranny. Though he *made himself* the servant of all, yet it was the act of one who knew himself to be *free from all*.

In the close of the chapter, he illustrates his general principles by an allusion to the Ithmian games. What striving there is in the stadium! What exact conformity with essential rules! How carefully every thing is avoided, that might unfit for contest! And all to obtain a perishable crown, a withering leaf! How much more devoted ought we to be, who look for the life that shall never end, and have a crown to win that shall never fade! On this principle, which so evidently covers the laws of human agency, says Paul, I act. In running the christian race, I always consider myself as under the eye of my omniscient judge. In the contest I have to maintain, I make no vain efforts; but seriously endeavour to mortify my flesh, and to bring my pas-

sions into subjection, lest, after having preached the gospel to others, I myself should want my ministerial proof; or should be a cast-away—one whose plea is not sustained, and whose career has not been approved; and so I should lose my reward.

A *reward*, Paul declared he expected, and laboured to acquire. How shall we justify his declaration? He seems to have calculated upon a reward proportioned to the abundance of his labours of love, and to have esteemed the reproach of Christ great riches, because he had respect, like Moses, “unto the recompense of the reward.” On what principle does he rest his calculation? I know of none, unless personal responsibility forms an integral part of that moral scheme, denominated the gospel. But into the abstract question, I have no desire to enter. The theological arena has long since been filled with combatants, and centuries have rolled by, hurrying the children of angry strife to their account beyond the grave. I satisfy myself with proffering a statement in illustration, as purely scriptural, as, under present circumstances, I can make it.

In the third chapter, he had informed these Corinthians, that their contests about the comparative excellence of different ministers, was a display of mere spiritual puerility: that he who planteth, and he who watereth, are one; and that every man shall receive *his own reward according to his own labour*. In the arrangements of divine providence, I have, said he, been called to lay the foundation of God’s building in Corinth, and “let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man’s work shall be made manifest. For

the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, *he shall receive a reward*. If any man's work shall be burned, *he shall suffer loss*; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." Now Paul expected his own reward according to his own labour; and therefore was careful to build on this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, or those things which would bear the action of the judgment fires. He wished not to suffer loss, and therefore was careful not to build wood, hay, stubble, for these the flame would consume. His desire was to stand approved by his judge before an assembled universe: and instead of being condemned for indolence and imbecility, to receive an abundant entrance into his everlasting kingdom. Like his brother apostle, he was looking to himself, that he might not lose the things he had wrought, but might receive a full reward.

It is to be presumed that the Master himself is fully acquainted with the principles of his own kingdom; and has exhibited the attributes of moral obligation with precision and accuracy. "The kingdom of heaven," said Jesus, "is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man *according to his several ability*; and straightway took his journey." Here is something equivalent to that "necessity," of which we have been discoursing: a stewardship was committed, or a dispensation granted, unto them; as there was now to Paul, by him, whose departure from his ministerial servants was through the hea-

vens, within the veil, and to the throne of the universe, whence he will come to judge the world. "He who had received five talents," continues the master, "went and traded with the same, and gained other five talents. And likewise he who had received two, he also gained other two." They laboured according to their ability, and in their own proper sphere, and were successful according to their labour. "But he who had received one talent, went and digged in the earth and hid his Lord's money." He was indolent and faithless. He did not labour according to his ability. Though he *could* have done so, for his lord's bounty had made him sufficient, yet he *would* not: and endeavoured to cover his perfidy by reproaching his lord's character and government.—You carry along with you, it is presumed, the fact that we are tracing a scriptural simile of Christ's kingdom, or the gospel dispensation.

"After a long time, the lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them. Then he who had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold I have gained besides them five talents more. His lord said unto him, well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." He received his own *reward according to his own labour*.

"He also that had received two talents came, and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold I have gained two other talents besides them. His Lord said unto him, well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make

thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." He also received his own *reward according to his own labour*.

"Then he which had received one talent, came and said, Lord I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth; lo, there thou hast that is thine." This is adding insult to faithlessness. There is no labour, and *consequently no reward*. There was positive guilt, in first misusing his lord's talent, and then abusing his good name. "His lord answered and said unto him, thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore, to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

This, the Redeemer informs us, is an exhibition of our moral relations under the gospel; and in view of the principle, so familiarly illustrated, he would urge us seriously to consider our personal responsibility, "looking diligently lest any fail of the grace of God." Every man must labour in his own place, according to his own ability: ability imparted by him who has gone within the veil, and who will presently come to reckon with us. "Behold," says he, "I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every *man according*

as his work shall be." He who has delighted in his work, and has brought forth the fruits of righteousness, abiding with God in his calling, and faithfully employing the ability which God giveth, as well as he who thought religion severe, duty a toil, and the cross an unsupportable burden, shall be there to give in their several accounts. "As in Adam *all* die, so in Christ shall *all* be made alive;" and then, "every one of us shall give account of *himself* to God." My God, what an hour! Who here is prepared to sustain the issues of his personal responsibility? Who is able to receive the simple and unqualified truth, that "circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God?"—I would that none of us may be found in that day, to have made an ecclesiastical form a substitute for a good conscience, or the traditions of the elders a sett-off against the righteousness of God.

This application of his simile, the master has not left to our own discernment to perceive, nor to our own courage to proclaim. He has thrown himself between his faithful servant, and the false ethicks of religious theorists, and interposed his own decision to preclude all those objections by which the simple principles of evangetic morality are so often assailed. Hear his own account of the matter. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right

hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or a-thirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

Our subject admits of very large scriptural illustrations: but what we yet design, must be done in haste. “He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet’s reward. And he that

receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." "Behold," said Peter, "we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? Verily, I say unto you," replied the Master, "That ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit eternal life." You remember, that on one occasion, a personal controversy had broken the harmony of the little circle that surrounded the Redeemer, like that which still disgraces ministers, who, Diotrephes like, love to have the pre-eminence, which of them should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? Jesus, placing a little child before them, with all the firmness of his own characteristic tones, said unto them: "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." "Ye know," said he, on another occasion, "that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great, exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister: and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

To wind up the whole, and refer once more to the judgment day. "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the heaven and the earth fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged, every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire."

This prophetic vision shall presently be to us a real scene; and the hour when our eyes shall see it, is coming on with the rapidity of the whirlwind. It is a matter of awful importance to us, that our names should be written in the book of life: that when we die in the Lord and rest from our labours, our works should follow us. Let us, therefore, look to the things we have wrought, *that we may receive a full reward.*

Having now finished our analytical view of the passage, selected for consideration on the present occasion, some general practical propositions are pressed upon our attention, on the illustration of which we cannot enter, without realising the most profound interest in their subjects. And the first of them is, that

The minister of the gospel should consider and deport himself, as, most unequivocally, the ambassador of the Lord Jesus. However he may condescend to

the infirmities of men, he is yet "not without law to God, but under the law of Christ."

It is surely a conceded truth, with all who compose this assembly, that our official relations are of divine origin; and that, as such, they are recognised by the master himself in the administration of his kingdom. A divine commission to the consecrated persons, who minister in holy things, is an elemental principle of both dispensations. No man may take this honor to himself, or obtrude himself upon the ministerial office, without a clear correspondence with the constitutional principles of the economy under which he ministers. Aaron's rod that "brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds," was laid up before the testimony, to be kept as a token against the rebels, who had questioned his divine commission, and would have torn from his brow his official wreath; and now our record is on high—the Lamb that was slain is before the throne. They, who obey not the ministry of reconciliation in the Lord *now*—I say, *in the Lord*, for original authority they have none—must be found in the historical classifications of the judgment books, paged along with Korah, Dathan and Abiram, or with the sons of Sceva the Jew. "Go preach my gospel to every creature," said our exalted Immanuel, "and lo, I am with you always to the end of the world." "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."—O, that none of us may betray our Lord, to save ourselves; or think lightly of the agitations of that spirit, which was so greatly troubled, when one of the twelve violated his consecrating oath, and conducted his unresisting master to the cross.

The use I would make of this truth upon the present occasion, is to urge upon ministers the imperious duty, of substantiating their ministerial character before the world, and in the midst of the church. I mean not simply, by pointedly proclaiming the theoretical principle, but by fairly exemplifying the practical fact. The scriptures would admonish every one of us, on all occasions, and at every hazard, "Study to show thyself approved unto God—make full proof of thy ministry—let no man despise thee." And particularly the young minister, with whom too many are disposed to trifle, and of whose ministrations they often speak with great severity, they would enjoin; "Let no man despise thy *youth*, but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." The minister stands disgraced, who is pusillanimous, cowardly, or shrinking, when his commission is in question and his work is to be done. "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind." We must stand forth as consecrated agents, the very principle of whose efficiency is the power of Christ resting upon them; we must plead with men as though God were speaking by us: we must write the epistles of our commendation in the hearts of men, instead of being satisfied with that ephemeral eulogy, which even a little faithless effort may acquire: and thus become the visible ministration of the invisible spirit, which Paul celebrates as most mysteriously and unspeakably glorious.

Infidelity here is as easy as it is awful. What temptations surround us! What inducements press upon us! What multiform opposition may array itself against us! What varied occasion for the cowardly to tremble,

and the indolent to keep out of the way! Who cannot see the declivity from those heavenly places, in which we ought to be seen sitting with Christ our master, down through all, and to all, that is "earthly, sensual, and devilish?" Is there no danger of a minister becoming afraid to assert, and even unable to perceive, his own official dignity? Or, conforming himself to the habits of thinking of the age in which he lives, rather to seek a similitude to those around him, than to be recognised as "the glory of Christ?" Might not such an one, with such a plea, be denounced for his mad enthusiasm, or his chivalric ardour? And might he not prefer to the reproach consequent on such pretensions, the vain applause awarded to the theological disputant, the philosophic reasoner, the literary beau, the popular preacher, the sectarian zealot, the political or ecclesiastical partisan? Might he not exchange all that is ethereal and transforming, in those evangelic tones with which he should address himself, in the name of Jesus, to the consciences of dying men, for all that is frigid and formal, prim and pompous, in a high, but false estimate of his personal importance? O how often have such unhallowed things been done in God's holy temple! How often have men preached their own speculations, instead of the grace and righteousness of Christ Jesus, and ventured to endorse a transfer of other men's responsibilities to themselves! And what frequent opportunities do every day transpire, eminently calculated to decoy us from our ministerial elevation, and to teach us, to cover with our own tattered mantle, or to substantiate by our own withering arm, those official pretensions, which should be overhung by the cloud of Jehovah's glory!

The illustration of this inference, requires us very distinctly to notice the operations of the spirit of God, in relation to the living teacher. Of old, "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Magnificent was the spectacle by Jordan's stream, celebrated, among other spiritual associations, as the baptismal font of the second Elijah, who was sent to attend upon the inauguration of the Son of God, when the opening heavens dispensed the Holy Ghost upon his consecrated head. And not less interesting were the celestial wonders of Pentecost, when the long recorded prophecy, "in the last days I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh," was fulfilled, and the illiterate fishermen of Gallilee were so gloriously inducted into the Apostolic office. And is it all gone by—no longer known but as the halcyon tale of other times? Is the living teacher now a mere creature of intellectual form, whose scholarship is to qualify him to deal with the consciences of men, and save immortal souls? Does the Holy Spirit no longer dwell in the church, or sanctify the human body as his temple? Or, has he ceased to employ the ministry, as a chief and glorious instrument to execute the mediatorial scheme? O, the minister of the gospel, without the spirit of his office,—what is he? A creature of small conception, of feeble effort, and sectarian manœuvre. What does he utter? An argument that may be ingenious, eloquent, coldly accurate; an appeal that may possess all the characteristics of the most ardent zeal, and yet be entirely destitute of that spiritual savour, which ascends in all its fragrance to heaven, accepted by the master, whether in the hearer the issue be life or death.

Does my doctrine jeopard ministerial pretensions, by elevating them too high? O, did I not know that this is the very glory of the ministerial office, and that the Holy Ghost is Christ's witness on earth, I should stammer and hesitate. But the Scriptures have described his economic character, and referred to him as the author of spiritual gifts, whose it is to beautify the christian, and perfect the church, even as he garnished the heavens of old. The man who possesses this seal of his ecclesiastical relations as a minister of the gospel, is fit for his duty whatever it is, and for his station wherever it may be.

Am I presumptuously calling back the age of miracles, and instituting a spiritual claim, which rivals the false Apostle in his frantic calculations? O, I shudder, lest unbelief may have already invested our argument with all those reasonings, by which the conceited philosopher has arranged the material universe under fixed laws, and enthroned Jehovah far out of sight, careless, supine, and unobservant, substituting the fitness of things for a providence divine. Say, my brother, will not he, who makes his sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and sends his rain upon the just and the unjust, attend thee to the valley of dead and dry bones, and while thou art prophesying in his great and dreadful name, demonstrate the excellency of the power to be his own? Go, pray for the spirit of thine office. Go, entreat for that inspiration he has promised to breathe over thy sluggish powers. Do it especially now. For there is a general movement among the hosts of the Almighty: the human mind has set out upon her march to freedom; and the events of her course may prove to have been symbolised by the burning mountain of the

Apocalypse cast into the sea, and which, instead of being extinguished amidst the rolling surges, turned them into blood. Man must be free: yet man is his tyrant. But the Son of God is coming to set him free. The kings of the earth, counselled by philosophic politicians and literary discoverers, and supported by myriads whose panoply modern genius may have wrought, will probably be on the one side; clothed with the spirit of thy office, be thou under the banner of Jesus on the other. Will you abandon these pretensions, and plead for an office of smaller size, sinking shamefully down into fear or sloth? Then shall there come "a famine in the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it."

I would not leave this subject without adverting to its practical effect. Very much do I fear, that hearers of the gospel judge of their ministers as literary men: men of talent; men of eloquence; men of great systematic accuracy; but too seldom as men of God. O what a fall is here! Is this, brethren, our place in the house of God? But what more can we expect, if we ask for no more, if we claim no more? Know you not, that Satan never riots so voluptuously in the sorrows of our race, as when the Priests of the Lord are brought low, or the ark of the Lord is gone? Know you not, that it is one of his most unwearied and successful artifices, to curtail your influence by robbing you of your spirituality? Who should have a higher idea of the ministerial office than the minister himself? What dost thou esteem thyself to be, O preacher? Art thou not

the Lord's standard bearer? Has he not put a heavenly ensign into thy right hand; and, nerving thee with all might by his spirit in the inner man, bid thee carry it, under the auspices of him who is the resurrection and the life, until, summoning thee to "wipe from thy brow the dust and heat of battle, to bathe thy wearied limbs in the waters of immortality," and to come up into his awful presence, thou shouldst plant it an everlasting memorial before the throne of God and the Lamb? Be faithful to thy trust. Abide at thy post. Be familiar with the prayer of faith. Tremble under no man's frown. Thy master will justify and bless, will reward and crown thee before an assembled universe: and thy spiritual children who have shared thy sorrows on earth, shall share thy honours in eternity.—The minister of the gospel should consider himself as an ambassador for Christ Jesus, as though God did beseech men by him.

II. Our second general proposition is, that the minister of the gospel should consider his call to preach the gospel as a personal matter; never to be decided by any trains of reasoning which preclude his own consciousness of duty.

Paul asserts that in his case an extraordinary, but an indisputable, commission had been sealed: a *necessity* had been laid upon him; the stewardship of the gospel had been committed to him; a command had been given, and there was not the shadow of an apology for disobedience or hesitation. Yet at the same time he intimates, that the circumstances of his ministerial call might have been very different: that the whole might have been referred to his personal deliberation, decid-

ed as a matter of his own will, judging as a rational and responsible man, from the common, or less imperative, intimations of divine Providence, and thus have constituted the subject of his glorying. Such, I apprehend, is the general fact *now*, when the apostolic office, created by an extraordinary call growing out of extraordinary circumstances, is no longer necessary.—To express my meaning more distinctly; instead of those tones of resistless sovereignty, which leave to a responsible creature no room to demur, and under which, with his own peculiar agitations, Paul exclaims, “wo is unto me, if I preach not the gospel,”—“rise, stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness,” the voice of the Lord might have proclaimed, “whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And his reply might have been, or your reply, my young brother, if thou hast conscientiously considered the matter, may be, “Here am I, O Lord, send me.” What a flood of light does this pour over those perplexities, which so often distract the young heart that pants after ministerial enterprise! Over those unexpected difficulties, that so often appal the most determined spirit in the midst of the most active duty, and the most successful effort! Over those loathsome temptations, which not unfrequently gather sadness and gloom on the brow of withering old age! It is the reduction of an abstract question, based on some supposed purpose, as irrevocable as it is occult, to a plain matter of personal experience and practical evidence. On these terms, may not the spirit of many a devoted and ardent minister, burst forth in all the fulness of spiritual liberty and consecrating glory?—O, it “is a true saying, if a man desireth the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.”

Our doctrine then is, that the ministerial call is not a matter of hereditary right or parental injunction; is not a matter of intellectual enterprise or literary ambition; is not a matter of secular profit or pecuniary calculation; is not a matter of untutored zeal, or indifferent circumstance; is not a matter of mere theological education, or ecclesiastical ceremony; is not a matter of sectarian size, or national monopoly; but is a matter of direct and frequent, of elevating and transforming, consultation between a man's own soul, and the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of the ministerial office. O man of God, the Spirit of the Lord must lift thee up above the world; and by an afflatus associated with thy opportunities, constitute thee a co-worker with God! In thy track angels move as ministering spirits; and under the power and savour of thy sanctuary services, must redeemed souls ripen for the skies. Dividing to each his portion in due season; bringing out of thy treasury things new and old, as a scribe well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven; weeping with those that weep, and rejoicing with those that rejoice; travailling in birth for them, until Christ be formed in them; multitudes must be seen by thy side in their new forms of spiritual existence, clad in the meekness of wisdom, and the beauty of holiness. "To do thy will, I take delight," was the emphatic declaration of him, who loved us even unto death, and gave himself for us. And with like consideration, cheerfulness and firmness, should we undertake the solemn work of the ministry, "addicting" ourselves to all its spiritual services, with all diligence and affection.

Now then, can we substantiate our ministerial call under such a searching appeal to our own consciences?

Have we reviewed our relations with human beings, and realised the vivid operations of the Holy Ghost spreading out a sacred unction over all the powers of our souls? Have we acquired those strong perceptions of truth, which have enlarged our hearts, and induced us to enter up a resolve, prompt and firm.—to engage in a covenant transaction with him who has said, “Go preach my gospel to every creature?” In the elasticity of our own sanctified spirits, have we surveyed the wants and sorrows of our race, until our hearts have been melted and mellowed, prepared for all the varieties of the service, and ready to become “all things to all men?” These are things entirely personal. For “what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?” Another cannot know them, but must wait until they have taken the visible form of external effort. Examine, my brother, for thyself. Answer to thine own inquiring spirit, whether such a glow of ministerial inspiration pervades and elevates thee; and then enter upon thy work, like one who loves it, and is determined, at all hazards, and under all circumstances, to execute it.—O how delightful then the task! Amidst all discouragements and unkindnesses, and many of them shall meet thee in the way, thou hast Elijah’s mantle wherewith to wipe away the burning tear; and a portion of the spirit, which thy ministerial activities never can exhaust, but which every hour shall enlarge. The rod in thine hand, like Aaron’s, shall bring forth buds, and bloom blossoms, and yield almonds;—thou shalt find it in the folds of the Redeemer’s glory, when he calls thee to enjoy what he has gone before to prepare for thee, amid the ceaseless praises of the upper sanctuary.

But this matter of the ministerial call, as expressing our personal volitions, must be pressed considerably farther. When Paul speaks of it in relation to himself, you observe how he generalises it, so as to cover all the opportunities presented in his large sphere of action, and how completely he is saturated with the spirit of his age. What magnanimity does he, though once a determined and systematic Jew, evince, in abandoning the mistakes of his fathers, and the prejudices of his youth, to meet the Gentile upon his own ground! Nay, how much farther he carries it, when his full heart takes up men as human beings, and estimates, with so much freedom, the salvation or loss of an immortal soul, along side of a national peculiarity or an ecclesiastical form! An idea, which we can never embrace, unless we abandon our sectarian principles, which shape our minds and our morals after their own small pattern. This day in which we live, and which calls upon us to exhibit ourselves in all the wide-spreading glories of our ministerial commission, requires us to imitate Paul. Every minister of the gospel now, ought most prayerfully and profoundly to meditate upon the signs of the present times; and taking his conscience out of the hands of ecclesiastical courts and congregational assemblies, that the Master may form it for himself, aim to be fitted for ministerial enterprise by catching the spirit of his age.

Our fathers, whose memories we should venerate, and whose names we should never mention but with love;—though let me remark by the way, that I have no idea of degrading my compeers in the nineteenth century, nor, permit me to add, though it may seem a little vain-glorious, of lowering my own inconsider-

able self, down to the level of something like an irresponsible idiotism, in order to magnify the natural powers, the acquired talents, or the spiritual gifts, of Calvin, Luther, and others, who range along with them, under the same providential influences that consecrated their effort in the cause of christian and ministerial liberty, to the good of mankind. And if, in rising to their level, and refusing to exchange one ecclesiastical lord of conscience for another, I shall be reprobated as a rash assailant on long established usage and hereditary impression, and can obtain nothing in self-justification among the sons of Zion, whom the Son of God came to set free; painful as it may be, I will appeal to the liberal institutions of my native land, on whose peaceful shores the standard of liberty has been planted for the admiration of the world.—Our fathers are of about as much use to us as Paul's fathers were to him. A new revolution is now modifying every human concern, and purifying the human intellect for the most glorious achievements. And morals must sympathise with science in a change, which, however men may like it, and whatever they may think of it, will, must, and ought to, occur. Have we taken this into consideration, and felt it wake up the full anxieties of our souls, as though, under a heavenly impetus, hourly accelerating our speed, we were pressing ardently onward in the delightful work of the regeneration? Has it made our ministerial likeness more exact, rendered us more companionable in our common employment, and more sympathising under our common infirmities? Has it given tenseness to our nerves, imparted a glow to our cheeks, and increased our ministerial power, as though "the Spirit of glory and of God rested upon us?"

Have we carried it to the mercy-seat? Has it attended us in our walks, or been the theme of our agitations when sleep has departed from our eyes? Or, hanging all our speculations upon the abstract subject of preaching consistent doctrine, measured out to us by the councils of ages past, have we been strangers at home, blind to all the evolving purposes, which are shaking the whole earth?—The politician that has analysed the character of kings, and speaks so enthusiastically about the liberties of Greece, or frowns with such contempt upon the projects of the holy alliance against the liberties of mankind, has taken a different route of thought, and looks wistfully for the time of action.—And the world should not be ahead of the church.

Our Bible societies—one of whose chief advantages is, that they afford to christians and christian ministers, an opportunity of uttering declarations, and arranging plans, free from all restraint, which would scarcely be thought of in our church courts as they are now constructed—our Bible societies have created a new era in the moral world: have heaved into being a new principle of ecclesiastical operation; a principle, liberal, enlarged, magnanimous, celestial: a principle, which will leave us, like the exhausted oars-man, struggling against impetuous and swelling floods, unless it animate our own souls, and elevate us to conceive the magnificent idea of converting the world. Jehovah's hand has already divided the waters; the Israel of God, passing through to their millennial rest, are receiving their baptism from the cloud of his glory, and swearing allegiance to him, with whom they shall live and reign a thousand years upon the earth. And they who oppose themselves with Egyptian temerity, may share

in Egyptian destruction, when the wave shall return at his command, who looks forth from the midst of his thick darkness. The anticipation of the millennium ought now to seize the bosom, and the preparatory measures ought now to occupy the attention of every minister of the gospel. Not indeed under the impression that he can accomplish the whole: but that in his own place, and to the utmost extent of his opportunities, he may be seen like a shining link in the general chain that encircles the earth—like a burning seraph, whose modes of operation express the whole of a divine purpose as far as he knows it. The subject of a ministerial call now, should induce a man to inquire most seriously, whether he has mind and heart, conscience and purpose enough, to be a co-worker with God in the conversion of the world? Whether, amid these celestial movements, he can bear to give himself up to “a detestable neutrality,” or can let go his own little schemes of theological aggrandisement, to embrace that loftier and larger project, which will presently cover the earth, from the rising to the setting sun, with the glory of the invisible God. Sectarianism is now falling, like the worn out economy of Moses, in the days of Paul. Art thou ready to become all things to all men? Or, like the Judaic teacher, is thy tongue yet unfit for any thing but the Shibboleth of thy party, and thy mind still fettered with the obsolete forms of an expired ritual?—The question is peculiarly interesting to the young minister, who expects to be in the church militant, when his fathers, whose advice he now reveres, and before whose glance he now cowers, shall have joined the church triumphant in glory. It will require great force of personal volition, and all that is awfully solemn in a purpose, as

ethereal as a purified conscience can make it. And let every old minister of the gospel, whose praise may be in the churches, and whose opinions may carry great weight in ecclesiastical councils; who knows that his influence may sustain some project by precluding examination, and who feels how unspeakably precious are a good conscience and conscious worth; take good heed to himself, how he interfere with the intellectual elasticity of a young man, whose mind and heart God may be forming for the conflicts of the coming times. It would be cruel to possess the ears of christendom with suspicions of his integrity. They would freeze his youthful ardour, and throw him like an ecclesiastical orphan among frigid formalists, or unenlightened and unrelenting professors. God can keep and bless young ministers of the gospel, without making them the heartless idolaters of the dead, even as he did Joshua of old, when the tomb of Moses was erected where no man ever saw it, and his body, which had once been mantled in glory too heavenly for human vision, was shrouded in all the mystery of a divine transaction, unresolved, until the apostles saw it in its spiritualised form, on the mount of transfiguration.

III. *Our third general proposition is, that the minister of the gospel should be a man of great personal tenderness.*

Jehovah has not only framed for us a "blessed gospel," ratified it by the blood of his Son, and confirmed it by the testimony of the Holy Ghost; but he has constructed the instrumentalities of its operation upon the most gracious plan; so as to secure the happiest result, by the combination of all those principles which characterise

our earthly estate. We may argue upon the theological problem of human ability and inability as long as we please; but the evangelic fact is, that though naturally disqualified as moral agents by sin, there is now as beautiful and striking a correspondence between the provisions of the gospel and the infirmities of our corrupted nature, as there originally was between the powers of man and the peculiarities of the first covenant; just as there was an adaptation of the ceremonial law to the "heir under age," or as there is now, an elevation of external privilege, and an enlargement of spiritual liberty, to coincide with the dispensation of the spirit of adoption. Thus men "of like passions" are called to address sinners on the high concerns of their salvation, that, from the simple fact of the preacher being identified with the hearer under the same moral institute, and by the same constitutional defect, the power of human sympathy might be enlisted on the side of the ministerial commission. Whose spirit is not moved, when he ponders Paul's portraiture of the old testament Priest?—He is "taken from among men, and ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." And who can, without emotion, peculiar and strong, hear him speak of his master in strains like these?—"Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself

hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. We have not an high Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are." How much does it resemble the pathetic narration Isaiah gives of Israel's covenant state;—"In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them and carried them all the days of old!" Or his own tender wail over Jerusalem's fate;—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate!"

And is this the pattern to which we are to be conformed? Is this the similitude after which we must minister in holy things? Do our official relations bring us into like scenes, and place us under like necessities? Surely then our simple commission, while it abhors every thing that fritters down the awful realities of God's righteous government to the maxims of human philosophy, rebukes every thing about us which is haughty and insulting, which is harsh and inveterate, which is not pacific, condescending and kind. "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men; apt to teach; patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." Our ministerial blessing should be like the dew-drop upon the ancient manna; a sweet savour, which the God of love sheds upon the bread that comes down from heaven.

Among other things, which this view of our spiritual character betrays as highly reprehensible, it is worth our while to examine, how far our habits of controversy cherish our ministerial sensibilities; or what kindness we can conceive ourselves to show to him that is weak in the faith, when we “receive him to doubtful disputations?” Worth our while to inquire, how far our modes of ecclesiastical debate, our estimates of each other’s characters and usefulness, our tenderness for each other’s conscientious scruples, or our regard for each other’s good name, reveal the pure ministerial heart? Worth our while to ascertain, whether heavy and inexcusable failures in this matter, have not been laid up for investigation, by him who comes to make inquisition for blood? Worth our while to be informed, whether those convulsions which are about to shake the world and the church to their centres, are wakening up our sympathies for our race; whether in the change that is coming, and which is carrying up the moral nature of man to a higher state of perfection, we are prepared to exemplify that greatest of all christian virtues, LOVE, as the peculiar characteristic of the millennial age: and whether, being harnessed as for contest in Jehovah’s name, we can classify our ministerial growth along with those other signs of the times, which are so rapidly gathering up all the spiritual analogies of the moral world?

There is a scriptural simile on this subject, with which surely we ministers ought to be well acquainted. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” To what shall we compare it? It is like the consecration of Aaron, when clad in those holy garments, which were designed for “beauty

and glory:" "like the precious ointment upon the head, which ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments." Or like the dew falling upon the higher summit of Hermon, and thence descending to the lower summit of Zion, where Jehovah commands his blessing, even "life that shall never end." O surely, this consecrating oil of those holy beings, with whom sensible signs are lost in spiritual realities, should beautify and spiritualise our whole ministerial person. How should it be otherwise, when our delightful theme is, the love of him who loved us, and gave himself for us; and our glorious object is, the lifting up poor sinners from the depths of hell to the heights of heaven, that they may celebrate that love for ever and ever?

It may be necessary here to remark, that while the reality is lovely, the affectation of tenderness is detestable. A minister of the gospel has surely enough to elicit all his mind, and excite all his heart; the power of which combination is one of his best ministerial gifts. Nothing is more easy than to acquire artificial tones, and thus substitute a puerile play upon the human ear, for a manly appeal to the human conscience. Nothing is more undignified than a laboured attempt to stereotype cant phrases, as though they were the spiritual essence of truth itself. Nothing more disproportioned to ministerial power, than incessant scrupulosity about little things, while great matters lie by unexamined. Nothing more hurtful than benevolent works, broken off from their scriptural connexions, and performed at the expense of essential principle or personal integrity. And nothing is more absurd than to square every man's scruples or convictions by our own;

instead of seeking personal improvement by close, unfettered, biblical inquiry. Every man is in danger of this spiritual affectation, just in proportion as he lets himself down below the Scriptures, the simple and glorious standard of truth: for if he does not know, he must affect to know, what the people ought to learn. A good conscience, preserved continually under the excitement of an honest attempt to know what Jehovah says in his word, will always elevate the tone of ministerial effort, and soften into the most exquisite tenderness the man who is in danger of becoming jejune, or seeks to be artful.—I tell you again, O preacher of the gospel, the spirit of thine office is a spirit of love, real and true. In all, “the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”—“Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.”

IV. The minister of the gospel should consider himself, as directly amenable to the Lord Jesus as his judge.

It is a solemn fact, that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming to judge the world. No man ought more habitually, or more sacredly to appropriate that fact to himself, as affording a principle of high spiritual excitement, than the minister of the gospel. Has he in using his five talents, gained other five talents? Or has he under a false or careless estimate of the character and government of God, hidden his one talent in the earth? Or, has he been anxiously hunting up substitutes, and consenting that his work shall be done by proxy, too thoughtless to feel, and too indolent to meet, his

personal responsibilities? How then shall he appear at Christ's right hand, where those who have forsaken all, and devoted themselves to the work of the regeneration, are robed in glory: and where the martyr glows with a brilliant resemblance to the master? How shall he answer to him, who has so explicitly stated the terms, on which celestial honours hang, to be, "he that will save his life shall lose it, and he that will lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall find it." Let every man inquire what amount of practical influence, the judicial character of the Lord Jesus exerts over his soul? What desires it kindles? What reverence it inspires? What efforts it sustains? Let him survey his relations to the church and the world: his opportunities of action; and the use of his gifts. Let him consider, whom he has begotten in the Lord; whom he has edified; whom, in erring from the truth, he has converted; whom he has comforted in sorrow; what lamb has he fed out of love to Christ; what child of sickness has he saved by his prayer of faith? Shall we appear before the throne without any proof of our spiritual ardour or ministerial fidelity, like those, who have never coveted eternal glory enough to deal in kindness to "the little ones" of Christ's kingdom? O! brethren in the Lord, prepare to meet the master when he comes to reckon with you. See that you be not rejected as those who have forgotten the coming of the Lord, or postponed it to a day far down in the vista of future years; and have begun "to beat their fellow servants," and to rejoice in all the sensualities of an earthly policy.—"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God—Our God is a consuming fire."

We are concerned with a variety of evangelic operations, which have attracted the attention, and received the offerings of all christendom. One of their best effects has been, to bring christians together: to make "the watchmen see eye to eye," and to hush up those angry controversies, which have so often made a minister of the gospel an Ishmaelite in his own city, and converted a contest for the faith once delivered unto the saints, into a synonyme with bitter and irreconcilable hostility against the saints themselves. They carry us higher up into the celestial atmosphere, and seem to spread out more abundantly the light of Jehovah's countenance over our christian fellowship. And he who still breathes resentments against his fellow professors, as if Christ was divided, or, in being reviled, imagines it to be "a detestable neutrality" not to revile again; instead of imbibing their spirit, and glowing with the new spiritual affections they elicit; might very profitably inquire how he shall exonerate his conscience, or justify his strife, at the bar of the Lord Jesus.—But still, may not christian benevolence, pressing on through her rapid course, leave unconsidered the essential principles of human society; and so commit mistakes not very easily remedied, because they will form an ingredient in our social organization? Novelty is very attractive, and when she puts on the meek face of benevolence, who can deny her suit? But christians, and christian ministers, ought to be men of intelligence; estimating the moral characteristics of society as very far superior to her political attributes, or her charitable feelings; for they must give account to the Lord Jesus for all their ecclesiastical attitudes, and moral associations. By mistaking the proportions or

colour of a leaf, a thoughtless moment may administer a deadly poison. It is not all gold that glitters; neither is that all right which seems to be so, either in politics or morals. We must take more than a superficial survey: thought, vivid and luminous, must create our decisions; rather than the prompt conformity of an undisciplined sympathy; or the submissive acquiescence of habit, which so often looks like the antipodes of responsibility.—I love not this “dead life” among the servants of Christ Jesus, who ought to hold communion with him “in the power of his resurrection,” and to have their “affections set on things above,” where he sits enthroned on the right hand of God.

It is no difficult nor uncommon thing to frame substitutes for this high principle of action; or to bring in human authorities, as calculated to produce a more immediate effect than “the fear of the Lord.” For example: the dread of a brother, or father, in the ministry, who may be reputed a man of talent, is sufficient to frighten or paralyse, where responsibility to Christ, which ought to absorb our whole soul, has excited but little emotion. I know the infirmities of human nature exist in all; but are we to apologize for our sin by adducing the fact of its existence; and so justify this scholastic power, either in him who exerts, or in him who feels it? May we exalt human talent above gospel truth, or rate the good opinion of our fellow men more highly than the salvation of immortal souls? May we convert the love of the brethren into the idolatrous awe of superior mind; or, by selfish and contradictory claims, invite a collision on the question, who is the greatest, rather than steadfastly maintain a reciprocal confidence? “Cease ye from man, whose breath is in

his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" The faithful preacher must be honest and determined; delivering his heavenly message without any hesitation, though like Micaiah the son of Imlah, he be surrounded by men high in favour and power; or like Elijah on mount Carmel, he stand alone amidst the priests of Baal.

Another example. A minister of the gospel may shrink from public criticism, and, as many have done, seek to gratify the public taste, by prophesying smooth things; forgetting that the Lord Jesus has commissioned him to declare his truth, "whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear." And it is a well known fact, that our congregations are full of critics of all sizes; too often almost as indifferent to spiritual impressions, as though a chaste figure, a classical allusion, a philosophic argument, or consistent gesture, were more important than evangelic realities. And what is the preacher afraid of? His ability will be questioned. O, this pride of talent. His popularity may not be sustained. O, this lust of fame. And is it not a small matter to be judged of man's judgment? Or has the Lord Jesus, as the Judge of all the earth, nothing to do with these questions?

And what do the people want? The philosopher instead of the minister; the finished scholar instead of the celestial messenger; the glow of literary instead of heavenly inspiration; metaphysical speculation for plain gospel truth: a mechanical, systematic discussion, for the full flow of sanctifying grace. And think they, their heavenly Father would treat them so? With a carelessness so devoid of sympathy? With a neglect that would jeopard all that is dear to man,

under a risk so awful? "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he, for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"—Can that man be in the path of his duty, who would compromise his master's message through fear of his hearers, or lend himself to be the tool of public whim, rather than the servant of Christ Jesus? So Balaam would have honoured Balak, instead of celebrating the Star that was to come out of Jacob, for he coveted the wages of unrighteousness. But the acquisition of a nation's applause, accompanied by something, he would think a little more substantial, a nation's rewards, was no stay to his immortal spirit, when passing into eternity, to give an account of his prophetic gifts, as he stood associated with the affair of Baal-Peor.

One more example. The dread of ecclesiastical authority, not unfrequently interferes with that sense of personal responsibility to Christ, we should most scrupulously cherish. They who sit in Moses' seat, have not yet lost their love for legislation, nor entirely abandoned their pretensions to infallibility. But whence this mighty power that appropriates the prerogative of the great Head of the church, and diverts the ministerial conscience from Christ's judgment seat? Whence this heresy against reason and truth, which covers individuality of existence under social law; and substitutes ecclesiastical statute for personal independence? What want we in the church? Tell me, if this be not

true;—we want the Spirit of God in the variety and plenitude of his operations: we want the Bible speaking her own language, and uttering her own law, free from the textual system of the sectarian expositor; we want the ministry, whatever may be their powers or their gifts, sanctified by the spirit of the ministerial office, having love for, and confidence in, one another, as though they estimated each other to be men of integrity; we want the human conscience, purified by the Redeemer's blood, and superintended by the spirit of truth. These are God's instruments of operation; and he who would engraft upon these all that is abstract and obscure in a technical theology, talks like a barbarian to me, and I unto him.—O, he who is afraid to declare what he finds in his Bible, or gathers exceptions to scripture truth among the opinions of the fathers, lest ecclesiastical authority, which would then be equally degraded, may crush him, wants his ministerial signet—**HOLINESS TO THE LORD**. In prophesying, he has covered his head, and dishonoured his constitutional prince: he has hidden the ministerial image of “the heir of all things” under a badge of subjection.

I know it may be said, that he who gives his *voluntary* consent to such a lordship over his conscience, has no right to complain if he be chastised for rebellion. **INDEED?** And may I, by solemn compact, will away the master's injunction—“Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your master, even Christ, and **ALL YE ARE BRETHREN**. And call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your father which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters; for one is your master, even Christ;” as if the church of God was a mere political association of human form? Or, having done it, may I not

blush for my error, and confess it before the world, without preparing myself to be disrobed as a minister of the Son of God, or to see the grace of repentance turned into a libel for deposition? When the sons of Jacob, dissatisfied with their political rule, demanded a king, the Lord was angry. Their request was granted to their hurt: the aggrandisement they sought was consummated in the loss of their liberty. And is not this enough? Enough, when laid along side of the history of papal darkness, or exchanged for a tale in the times of the Puritans, to alarm, and forbid us to yield the rights of conscience, or to accept our new covenant privileges as a bundle of ecclesiastical gratuities? Surely, the freemen of the Lord in the millennial age will suffer no such phylacteries on their ministerial robes:—their prophetic mantle shall be woven by the spirit of liberty, and every hanging fold be resplendent with spiritual beauty and heavenly glory.

V. Our fifth general proposition is, that the minister of the gospel should consider his BIBLE as the only document, which is, or can be, commensurate with his commission; and should study it, believingly and prayerfully, as the only method by which he can acquire true ministerial literature.

With such facts before us, as those to which the apostle adverts, there can be nothing heretical in supposing, that the moral maxims, the theological notions, and the sectarian writings, of any particular age in which a man may live, may very possibly lead him away from the truth: and especially when they foster bitter envyings and strife, which the Scriptures declare

are uniformly followed by confusion and every evil work. I should suppose, that this remark carries along with it its own evidence, and must command every man's assent. Paul certainly estimated his own age, as involving both the Jewish and the Gentile world in this very difficulty. His master had done so before him; and in that deeply impressive sermon he delivered on the mount, as well as in his frequent argument with the subtle, the learned, and conceited sects of the day, disclosed to them in all its size, the evil to which we now allude.

It must be instructive to trace out the principle of their ministerial enterprise; confining it, for our own sakes, to the manner of their proceeding with the Jews, as they possessed the Old Testament. The master's precept was, "search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me." Paul's method was, to become "as under the law, to them that were under the law"—or never to forsake revelation in reasoning with them who possessed revelation: and you know how much his writings abound with scriptural quotations.

Mark how powerful their argument, carrying conviction to every man's conscience, and overwhelming with confusion the most subtle disputant. "Whose son is Christ?" said the great witness for truth. "The Son of David," replied the advocate for the traditions of the fathers; taking, as is common among controversialists, one half only of what the spirit of prophecy had declared. But "how then," rejoins this head of the ministerial corps, "how then doth David, in the spirit, call him LORD?" and "if David then call him Lord, how is he his SON?" You remember what was the effect of this scriptural argument.

In like manner, meeting Paul, the Jewish theologian thought his adversary defeated by a single fact: Jesus of Nazareth sprang from the tribe of Judah, of which tribe, Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. True, says Paul; but the scriptures have assigned to Jesus a priesthood "after the power of an endless life," of which Melchizedek, and not Aaron, was the similitude. What could a Jew do against a scripture prophecy? His argument only betrayed his ignorance of the Bible, which yet he was reading every Sabbath day. And this was Paul's "manner:" he "reasoned with them out of the Scriptures: opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ;" thus answering a question, which may now be very confidently asked, how shall we get along with those of modern times who deny these principles, if we have nothing but the BIBLE?—What honest man can withstand an argument fairly scriptural? If any, then Paul replies, "if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant."—An awful alternative, I admit. But what else shall we do? The destruction of the flesh, and the salvation of the spirit in the day of the Lord Jesus, may follow even this painful conclusion, if the master should be pleased to bless it. No institution of ours can reach the case.

Surely we ministers of the gospel ought to be biblical students. We know that a magnificent revolution is about to accomplish her designs in the world, and yield to charity, her own proper place in the transactions of men. Our maxims, sized by our sectarian manuals, whatever may have been their suitableness to ages past, are entirely too narrow for these splendid

operations, and incapable of being applied to the multitudes of christians now to be called in. This, all christendom has admitted, by erecting Bible societies, and sending forth the Bible in her own native simplicity and beauty: an occurrence in which individuals have taken the lead of social bodies, and christians and christian ministers have outstripped ecclesiastical councils; and evinced that the responsibilities of individual existence, are more powerful than those which grow out of our social organization; or that he always does more who feels himself called upon by the immediate Providence of the master, than he who submits to the arbitrary distinctions of human authority. Let every controversialist ponder over the fact: he cannot help seeing it; for its dimensions are of immense size; broad as the earth and long as the sea; high as heaven and deep as hell; and every line of its record is radiant with glory.

We all know that every age has its own classification of what it apprehends to be scriptural truths. The Jewish Rabbies were succeeded by the colossal power of papal misrule; the reformation pronouncing the Bible to be the *only* rule of faith and practice, has yet been followed by various ecclesiastical authorities; and the union of church and state, even where it has been disowned, has yet made us virtually the legatees of a power that would dethrone the Redeemer as being the *ONLY* LORD of conscience. Who can now unequivocally declare the BIBLE to be the *only* rule of faith and manners, without falling under the most grievous suspicions, as though he had broken his covenant with his God, and denied the Lord that bought him? All our religious sects have their own classifications of what they

suppose to be scriptural doctrines. The matters which now startle christians and christian ministers into activity, and thrill along every nerve of the ecclesiastical body, are Calvinism, Arminianism, Hopkinsonianism, and other such like gorgeous fragments of Christ's spiritual kingdom. Another classification is yet to be made under the auspices of charity, which will be the peculiar property of every individual man, as the product of his own spiritual apprehensions, and personal experience. This will require the study of the Bible, and the true "introduction" to that, will be an unction that cometh down from above, and that teacheth all things; and which shall convert the literary into a spiritual man, and the son of strife into a child of love.

I know full well that a sentence thus distinctly expressed, embracing a sentiment so different from popular opinion, may seat fearful apprehensions upon many a timid heart, which may immediately anticipate discord and confusion as its immediate consequence. For me, for ME, I say, to consent to this as just, would be to libel God's Holy Bible, and to misrepresent the whole administration of the kingdom in the hands of its glorified head. And much do I marvel, that living in the midst of controversies, which, like a deathful paralysis have pervaded the whole ecclesiastical body, and shaken every ecclesiastical establishment to her very centre, much do I marvel, that any man should celebrate the harmonious operations of this age; assert that our sectarian regulations are necessary to create that moral similitude by which all christians should be known; and prognosticate discord and confusion as the legitimate and unavoidable consequence of mere Bible

authority. **THE BIBLE?** O, Brethren, the Bible will yet relume the ministerial mind; will impart the vigour of spiritual manhood to ministerial effort; will restore harmony, confidence and peace to ministerial communion; will gather around it all the nations of the earth, to identify them as integral parts of the mediatorial dominion; will convert, disenthral and redeem the world. And let every man prepare himself for the transactions of that hour, when faith in Jesus Christ shall become the dignified and honorable principle of christian action, and the known, recognised, substitute of ecclesiastical authority.

In elucidating this subject, it is necessary to remember that we are not to confide in human expositions. Our systems transplant scriptural truths out from their own heavenly connexions in the Bible, and classify them according to human conceptions. Our commentaries halt and stammer at a text, that may seem a little too Calvinistic, or a little too Arminian; and we halt along with them, summoning our ingenuity into conflict with theological difficulties. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." There is an unction that comes down from above; there is a heavenly wisdom which God gives to all that ask him; there is a teaching which he himself conducts with the souls of Zion's children; there is a consecration of the body for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, that he may bear witness with our spirits as to the character of gospel truth, and the existence of spiritual life; there is a light which he sheds, a power he exerts, a protection he affords—manifestly the treasury is in earthen vessels, but the excellency of the power is of God. Here the minister

of the gospel must take his stand, holding less consultation with flesh and blood, and more communion with the Holy Ghost; placing less reliance upon talent and learning, and more confidence in God; forming fewer calculations upon expediency, and making more bold, determined, and persevering effort in the name of the Master. Jesus, our Lord, my christian brother, has all power in heaven and earth given into his hands, and has promised to be with us to the end of the world. Draw believably and largely upon "the riches of his glory," nor ever imagine that thou canst exhaust his mediatorial fulness. Let us exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, diligently to study, and faithfully to preach out of the Scriptures. Let us pray for each other, that like Apollos of old, our kind and condescending master, may make us all eloquent men and mighty in the Scriptures. Talk not of the difficulty, tell us not of the obscurity of the sacred page; you misrepresent the charter of your hopes, and understand not the office of the Spirit of truth.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain,
God is his own interpreter,
And he can make it plain.

To me it is matter of the purest astonishment to hear christian ministers talk so untenderly about THE BIBLE, and speak so affectionately and feelingly about their OWN STANDARDS.—Standards, the meaning of which they have never yet settled, and about which there has been incessant controversy, both in public and private. They surely can never have fairly thought out what they say, or suffered themselves to apprehend the immense difference between the word of God and the doc-

trines of men, simply as exercising an efficient control over the consciences and lives of mankind. Let me entreat them to re-examine this matter for themselves, as in the presence of that "jealous God," who "will not give his glory to another, neither his praise to graven images;" and, as living in an age, and in a land, where human authorities have long since lost all their charm, and where every man is growing independent enough to think for himself. They will rise from the investigation, thinking more highly of their Bibles than they ever have done, and will inhale an air, sweet and pure as the zephyr of the millennial morn. They will enter into their Bible associations with new confidence, and will obtain for themselves, in their contest with the Gods of the nations, on yonder plain where all christendom is marshalling her hosts, the liberty wherewith Christ has set them free.

Could I pursue the practical inferences, which this subject has pressed upon my notice, any farther,

I would remark, that the minister of the gospel ought to understand all the meaning, and exemplify all the power, of "the prayer of faith," as certainly reverting to his own soul with an efficiency calculated to make him a holy man.

I would remark, that the minister of the gospel should possess an accurate and growing acquaintance with the moral principles of human society, rather than suffer himself to be circumscribed in his ministerial efforts, by her arbitrary arrangements or polemic distinctions: and that he should learn to simplify and apply truth to the details of human life, rather than detach his mind and heart from men as a company of sinners who need a Saviour, making himself diminutive by

frigid form, and useless by discussing abstract principle; and thus render himself unable to meet the public mind, that is formed rather for action than speculation.

I would remark, that the minister of the gospel should honour no name but that of his master, nor ever disgrace himself by a treasonable attempt to divide Christ.

I would remark, that the minister of the gospel ought to find enough, in his connexions with the church and the world, to occupy all his talent, however prompt or comprehensive; all his learning, however varied or refined; and all his life, however protracted.

I would remark, that the minister of the gospel ought to seek to possess the Holy Ghost, not only as the spirit of his office, but as the spirit of holiness to dwell in himself; like Paul, bruising his body, and bringing it into subjection, lest in the day of judgment he stand unapproved, or want the vouchers necessary to sustain his plea before the judge.

I would remark, that the minister of the gospel should learn how to estimate the use of money, in the projects he forms for the advancement of Christ's kingdom; and to take heed that he does not substitute the expediency of a commercial transaction, for the moral duty of individual and daily thank-offerings.

All and each of these inferences, are capable of fine, full, and thrilling illustrations. If any of my audience have patiently listened to what has been said, and feel any interest in the propositions we have simply stated, they will realise much pleasure in thinking them out for themselves. Every step they take, every new moral combination they acquire, every scriptural illustration they employ, will increase their spiritual vigour, and

greatly extend the sphere of their intellectual vision. They shall feel more entirely devoted to the service of the king of saints, and experience all religious privileges, all christian relations, all moral associations, to constitute one continued series of heavenly influences, exerting the most lively efficiency to make them spiritual men. They shall rise far above the vanities of this dying world, and, introduced into heavenly places in Christ Jesus, shall take up David's harp, most sweetly attuned to celebrate their new covenant blessings; "I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee. It is he that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword. Rid me and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood: That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace: That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store: that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets: That our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be no breaking in, nor going out; that there be no complaining in our streets. Happy is that people that is in such a case: yea happy is that people whose God is the Lord."—"Blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen and Amen."

I cannot now close this exercise, without adverting to the character of the present occasion, and expressing an ardent desire, that the spirit of the ministerial office, may richly endow with spiritual gifts the

servants of the Lord Jesus who are before me. The class of remarks, which I have felt myself impelled to make, in discharge of the duty assigned me; and under which, I hope I have felt some of those spiritual impulses which I have expressed with so much emphasis, and urged with so much ardour, increases the interest I take in the circumstances of this evening's services. They have given birth to some of the keenest anxieties I ever knew, that you, my young friends, who are approaching the altar, to minister in holy things before the Lord, may be men of God; full of wisdom and of the Holy Ghost, full of faith and power. The church will then be blessed in your ministry, and having turned many to righteousness, you shall shine as the stars forever and ever.

I counsel you to preach Jesus and him crucified; remembering that the cross of our Lord Jesus, whereby the world is crucified unto you and you unto the world, is the great constitutional principle of the gospel, in which you must glory: to be submissive to Providential arrangements in assigning you your sphere of labour, never thinking any station, to which God calls you, too humble to deserve your attention, but feeling assured that to seek divine direction is your most provident course, and that which shall be consummated in the most happy results: and most earnestly, importunately, and believingly to pray for the spirit of your office, that wherever you are fixed, he may make you useful and glorious ministers.

I counsel you to cherish the tenderest love for the souls of men, as though their present good and their everlasting salvation constituted the great objects of your spiritual labours. Let your heart's desire and

prayer to God for them be, that they may be saved. Sympathise with them in their sorrow, compassionate them in their ignorance; bear with them in their infirmities; weep with them when they weep, and rejoice with them when they rejoice. O, never, forgetting what manner of spirit ye are of, either preach or act, as though the great head of the church had sent you to destroy and not to save men's lives: as if you would rather bring fire than grace from heaven, and preferred judgment to mercy. Remember that your connexion with men is not a mere opportunity for personal ambition, or unrelenting censoriousness; but that Jehovah has robed you with salvation, and put into your hands a censer for ministerial service, that, like Moses and Aaron, you may stand between the living and the dead.

I counsel you to observe the signs of the times, and to have no communion with the sluggishness of those who will not: to estimate the relations in which this country of liberty, where God has cast your lot, and which has not yet taken her place among the nations of the earth, stands to the world. I urge not upon you the sin of national vanity as a ministerial virtue: but, as Jerusalem once formed the favoured object in Jehovah's love, and became a starting point for the glorious operations of the new dispensation, so America, beautiful in her youth, and yielding untrammelled to the minister of the Son of God his individual rights, has her own space in the arrangements of him who is judge of all the earth. Know you not that the genius of liberty has stepped to the meridian of this "land shadowing with wings?" He, whose eyes the Lord hath opened, observes her putting on her beautiful

garments which have been made white in the blood of the Lamb; pants to see her descend to grace the car of truth, and form that mighty array which is to disenthral mankind, and courts an adoption among her sons, ready to be as bold in enterprise, as rapid in movement, and as fearless in danger as they. Are our feelings chivalrous? Are not ages condensing their mysteries, and crowding their events, into an hour? Young minister of the gospel, thy threescore and ten years, may call thee to conflicts which inexperienced zeal does not now suffer thee to suspect: may entirely break up some of thy fondest associations with the living and the dead; may hide thee in caves and dens of the earth; may chariot thy redeemed spirit in a flame of consuming fire; may place thee in the firmament of his glory, like a morning star, to shed upon the valley of the shadow of death the first beam of the opening day; or may consummate thy efforts in the fulness of the Gentiles, and commission thee to introduce the sons of Jacob into the heavenly places of mount Zion. Our benevolent associations, creating their own instruments of action, and like gold becoming purified in passing through the furnace, may move on in delightful harmony, and with glorious success. Or there may come a falling away first, and the man of sin be revealed. Or Christ may hear the cry of oppressed human beings, as he did that of Abraham's children in Egypt: and come down in awful majesty, to plead the cause of human liberty, and set free the human mind.—Thy destiny amid such revolutions is an interesting subject to thy soul, my brother.

I counsel you to prepare to die. Death that enters every other circle, summoning young and old to the

judgment seat, lingers about our sanctuaries, and as he bears away the aged saint to his heavenly rest, his departing look is to the pulpit. Many a young minister has been laid in the cold grave, since you first meditated the solemn purpose that has brought you into the school of the prophets. And what dost thou know, or how canst thou tell, but that ere long there may be an officiating sphere for thee among the priests of the upper sanctuary. Time is short; very, very short. The thread of life is feebler than the spider's web; that gives to the breeze, and again returns. But man is gone, for ever gone. And they who desire further communion with him in his gifts and his graces, must go down through death and the grave to meet him in eternity. And shall the minister of the gospel trifle away his time? Lo, the elements melt with fervent heat: every mountain is on fire, and every hill in a blaze; the heavens are wrapped together as a scroll, and depart with a great noise; salient with life, up come the dead, both small and great; hell sends forth her legions in chains of darkness: all the angels come to judgment: the great white throne is erected; and the Judge appears. I counsel you to prepare to die. Be ready to breast Jordan's wave. Secure for thyself an irradiating beam from the New Jerusalem, whose light and whose glory are God and the Lamb; lest, when the books are opened, thy heart should break with anguish, and thy brow be covered with everlasting confusion.

May the Lord Jesus, the glorified Head of the church, enrich thee, my young brother, with his choicest gifts; consecrate thy whole person and life for ministerial service; and, as thou art walking beneath

the new heavens he has created, shed upon thy morning and evening hours, the dews of his blessing—
EVEN LIFE THAT SHALL NEVER END! AMEN, yea and
AMEN.

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